

# ADIBASI

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## CONTENTS

		Page No.
N. Patnaik	.. Anthropology in Public Health ..	1
P. S. Das Patnaik	.. Concept of debt among the Dongria Kondhs	11
B. B. Mohanty	.. A glimpse of social life of the Lanjia Saons	16
J. Dash	.. Role of kinship in the social life of Juangs of Keonjhar district, Orissa	22
Upali Aparajita	.. Traditional Political Organisation of the Sudha Saons	29

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## ADIBASI

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This is a quarterly journal dealing with articles and research findings in various social sciences, developmental strategies and other co-related matters emphasising the problems of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It also publishes reviews of books pertaining to the aforementioned subjects.

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Contributions based on Anthropology, Demography, Economics, Human Geography, Museology, Planning and Sociology with particular reference to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are invited. The articles should be type-written in double space on one side of half foolscap paper, invariably two copies of the articles should be sent. The contributors should also not forget to send their bio-data in a separate sheet alongwith the article and its brief synopsis. No remuneration is paid to the contributors. Only twenty-five off-prints of the articles are supplied. Two copies of the books should be sent for purpose of review.

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# Anthropology in Public Health

N. Patnaik

## Introduction

A physician from Canada who served for nearly three years in the American Friends Service Committee's (A. F. S. C.) village improvement project in Barpali, Sambelpur district, Orissa, India has said, "In public health work as in any other it is essential that those who offer social and technical assistance have as full an understanding as possible of the culture, traditions, and habits of village life in the area under consideration". His wife who also worked in the same project as the lady doctor has mentioned in one of her notes, "what we learned far exceeded what we taught". Both of them were aware of many problems of public health and maternal and child care from the day they worked in the area, but not until almost a year had elapsed were they in any position to make a meaningful approach towards meeting these problems.

What is obvious in their experience is that the knowledge about medical science alone does not serve the purpose of curing physiological abnormalities and improving health and nutrition unless it is coupled with social sciences. The most significant feature of the project was the incorporation of an anthropologist in its administrative and technical staff which is an unusual and uncommon phenomenon in the history of rural development projects. The common skepticism as regards the importance of an anthropologist in technical assistance project and relevance of his findings to the rural upliftment was conspicuous by its absence from the very inception of the project.

The major functions of the anthropologist were to provide scientific and factual bases for programme-planning and for evaluating techniques, methods and schemes undertaken in the

villages of the project and (1) analyse rural life and provide need-based scientific and factual bases for programme-planning.

(2) Share his findings with other technical staff of the project for their orientation in economic patterns of the area and socio-cultural conditioning of the people.

(3) Devise report forms and charts for keeping records of induced innovations or experiments.

(4) Evaluate on-going action programmes with the help of such records and through various diagnostic and receptivity surveys.

(5) Interpret to the staff of the project the village life patterns, caste regulations, and factors facilitating and inhibiting desired change.

(6) Assist the project in the selection of village and health workers, and their posting in villages, and

(7) Provide training to such staff at the grass-root level in methods of record keeping and surveying and in the techniques of understanding the matrix of rural culture and social structure including their implications for development.

## BARPALI—A PEASANT COMMUNITY

Barpali, the headquarters of the A. F. S. C.'s village improvement project which was known as Barpali Village Service (BVS) is situated at a distance of 45 miles south of Sambelpur town. It is a police-station comprising 77 villages all of which were included in the BVS. According to the 1961 census the population of the police-station was 54,000 and the density of population was about 860 people per sq. mile.

Barpali is a rice growing area and the crops are grown under raised conditions. Except some scattered patches of mango groves found here and there the entire area was without any forests. The indiscriminate felling of trees and the consequent deforestation had stripped the whole area bare of its forest cover leaving behind a vast wooded and depleted landmass.

Paddy is the principal crop grown and rice is the staple food of the people. There is a large population of weavers in the area, but most of the people, including the weavers are cultivators. Other significant occupational groups which comprise the caste composition of the area include porters, leather-workers, horticulturists, milkmen, oilmen, brass workers, silver and goldsmiths and blacksmiths. There are also many landless labourers almost in all villages of the area. Agricultural practices are of traditional type and the production from land is very low. For want of firewood cow-dung has been the main source of fuel energy. There is nothing like fuel-cum-ladder reserve and grassland for the vast live-stock population. As a result uncontrolled and extensive grazing has steadily rendered many areas barren and depleted. Under such circumstances the productivity of land has diminished considerably and there is very little milk yield from the bony and rickety cattle population.

The rural people of this region are accustomed to tank water. Unfortunately, the same tank is used for drinking, washing utensils, bathing men and animals, and for many other purposes. People use the high tank banks for urination and defecation; and these are washed down by rains into the tanks. There are a few wells owned by either individuals or communities. The water of wells is, however, not liked by villagers for drinking and cooking purposes. It is a common belief that, in contrast to water from tanks, well water has a different taste and is not good for preparing *panhale* which is the common breakfast, made by steeping boiled rice overnight in water. The complaint is that well water tends to give a yellow colour to rice, which also tends to split into pieces. Moreover, the well water is believed to cause urinary troubles. Concept of contamination and germ theory is beyond comprehension of the people.

Like the people of other rural areas, the inhabitants of Barpali are in the habit of going out to the fields for attending the call of nature. To many people latrine means a dirty place

where night-soil is found in heaps which produce bad odour. Naturally any talk about latrine tends to reflect an image of such a dirty place in the mind's eye of the people including a strong repulsive and disgusting feeling. To some people the use of latrine is symbolic of urban and western character. It has no place in village life. The idea of ritual pollution is associated with the use of latrine and contamination and infection which are caused by the habit of defecation in open fields appear to be fiction rather than a fact to most of the village people.

In most cases the diet of the village is of very poor quality and deficient in nutrition. It consists mainly of rice with the addition of a little ash and a few hot chillies. When vegetables such as brinjal, cucumber, ladies finger, tomato, etc., are available from own kitchen garden in rainy season the diet is improved to some extent with the addition of such vegetables to rice. The economic condition of a great many villagers is so poor that it hardly provides a minimum standard of living, in terms of diet, clothing and sanitation for a family to lead a relatively healthy and active life. The condition of wage earners and landless agricultural labourers is more precarious than those who follow other occupations. In the project area wages are paid to a labourer in the form of paddy which is barely sufficient to supply the caloric requirement to his family.

Protein intake is a rare phenomenon in most cases. Vegetable protein in the form of pulses and lentils forms part of the meals only on festive occasions which come once in a blue moon. Many people are barred by religious dictates from eating the available forms of animal proteins. High-caste Hindus strictly observe ritual taboo in regard to the use of chicken and egg in their diet. The milk output is practically nil in the area. Added to it the belief that milk causes cold limits the milk intake invariably in all sections of the population. The indigenous medical practitioners, herberts and quacks on whom the people have great reliance forbid their patients who suffer from some chronic illness caused by protein deficiency to take meat, milk, fish and egg. According to the rural etiquette male members in a family eat first of all and get the lion's share whereas the female members who are the last to eat get only the tip bit. Again in the case of the later the younger ones particularly the young daughter-

in-law who eats after everybody has eaten is the worst sufferer. She is not only underfed almost every day but also undergoes many dietary restrictions connected particularly with non-vegetarian diet imposed by older women of the family during her pregnancy.

The general living condition particularly in regard to environmental sanitation and hygienic condition and dietary habits is deplorable. During rainy season water is stagnated in dirty pools in village street which turns into mosquito breeding centres. Large number of people in every village suffer from malaria and attribute it to their fate and to the machination of evil spirits. Some also think that the illness is due to drinking too much water and too much bathing during summer. Any body wishing to keep the village street dry and clean by diverting the flow of dirty water meets opposition from the powerful village headman. As this water carries crowding and refuse from the street and outskirts of the village it is good for paddy plants. Naturally the headman, whose lands lie around the village, and which are enriched by the street washed water, is likely to give little consideration to the sanitation of the village in preference to the economic benefits which he derives from the street water.

Every village is overcrowded with population and the mud-built and straw or khapar thatched houses without ventilation are built close to one another. Epidemics of cholera and smallpox breakout almost every year and for want of adequate treatment and medical services deaths occur in large number. The people hide their children when the vaccinator visits their village. There are mainly two explanations given by the people for such behaviour. One is related to the belief that smallpox is caused by invisible village goddess and the therapy for it is not vaccination but appeasement of the goddess. The other reason is that the vaccination spots swell and cause pain and if the child is sick it means keeping the parents out of work for some days.

Leprosy, tuberculosis, and sexually transmitted diseases are not uncommon in the area and there is no clinic nearby for the treatment of such diseases. People are not aware that leprosy is an infectious disease and hold that those who killed cow and brahmin in their previous birth are destined to suffer from such disease in later life. When it is made public that some one in the village is afflicted with leprosy he is driven out from the village. This is something which

he considers his life's greatest disaster. For him his relationship with his native village goes beyond mere residence. It involves family ties, religious sentiment, and emotional attachment. The village represents his security, his lands and abode of his ancestral spirits. This is the only place in the whole world which he knows and in which he is known. Cut off from his village he is forced to wander as a starving beggar looked down upon by people wherever he goes until the eternal bliss intervenes when the vultures and jackals scatter his bones. He is so much in dread of signs of leprosy and social ostracism that it is but natural that he hides the disease until it cannot be hidden any longer.

Other serious diseases include tuberculosis, typhoid, and malaria, which sap the vitality of the people and deteriorate their condition. The best therapists available to the large mass of poor people are the village quacks, astrologers and Vaidyas who not only apply their respective injunctions and medicines but also seek the help of supernatural powers and sometimes combine both the types of prophylactic measure for curing or preventing illness. The village quack mainly follows herbal treatment, magical spell and several social and dietary injunctions for curing illness. The astrologer finds out the stars which are at enmity with the person and prescribes suitable rituals to remove good will of the stars. The Vaidya follows the humoral theory and detects by studying the pulses the nature of imbalance between the three fundamental physiological substances—wind (Vata) bile (Pitta) and phlegm (Kafa) resulting in illness and prescribes suitable herbal medicine for restoring harmony and warding off the disease.

The problems of health and hygiene among the most vulnerable section of the population, that is, women and children need special mention. Their medical needs are rarely met and they are the worst sufferers. The illiterate village midwife attends to the delivery cases and the older women's injunctions, superstitious beliefs and folktales serve as clinic for maternal and child care in the rural areas. Added to these social and cultural factors, the low literacy level, poverty and unhygienic house condition help in perpetuating the traditional belief system. There is a great desire for procreating children for the continuance of progeny and also for help in economic activities. But the care and well being of the mother and child is invariably left with the ancestral spirits and supreme god. Severity is attributed to

late and still birth to the evil spirits (Pisuni). Pregnancy is kept secret as far as possible and complications that arise at the time of delivery are sorted out either by the village dhal or through prayers and offerings to village goddesses.

### **BARPALI VILLAGE SERVICE**

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) after several negotiations with the Central and State Governments finally choose the Barpali Police-Station as the site of its major social and technical assistance project. As the headquarters of the project were located at Barpali village it was called Barpali Village Service (BVS). It was staffed by an international team of technicians. Besides there were a few village workers and health workers who belonged to the State of Orissa. The administrative and technical staff comprised one director (western), one administrative assistance (western or Indian), two agricultural technicians (1 western and 1 Indian), three doctors (western and Indian including one lady doctor), one nurse (Indian), one anthropologist (the author of this paper), two educationists (1 western and 1 Indian), one engineer and mechanic (western), one cottage industry specialist (Indian or western). The extension staff included 10-25 village workers and 10-15 lady health workers who were selected and trained by the technical staff.

From the staffing pattern it is obvious that the Barpali project was a multipurpose village development project. The major fields of endeavour were based on the arise of major needs which were identified through various diagnostic and receptivity surveys conducted by the anthropologist of the project. Works in agriculture, animal husbandry, public health, maternal and child care, textiles, education, mechanics and public works were carried on by demonstration, extension, teaching, and experiments. The village and health workers were stationed in different villages and worked in co-operation with villagers and village leaders under the technical guidance and supervision of the technical staff. The subject-matter of the paper is focused exclusively on the health and nutritional aspect of change and development in the project area.

The long-term aims of the health programmes were to develop preventive techniques, with the minimum of curative care, and to improve the level of health in the area. One of the main correlated aspects of health care is nutrition without the development of which no sustained

improvement is possible in the health of the people. Another interlinked aspect is health education without which receptivity of the people to improved health practices would be least and resistance to such innovations would be most. An analysis of the integrated and coordinated efforts of the project is beyond the scope of the paper. However, references to agricultural and educational programmes as they were needed for the promotion of health and nutritional status in the project area, have been made in the text wherever necessary to illustrate the points.

### **ANTHROPOLOGICAL SURVEYS**

The approach of the project was to make all the developmental programmes need based and attitude based and therefore the technical staff considered it unwise to base upon a kind inspired by people about whom nothing was known to them. Following this concept the anthropologist took up a survey of receptivity in the project area and collected information about (1) caste composition and caste occupation, (2) village leadership pattern, (3) agricultural pursuits, (4) sanitary condition, health practices and local medical practitioners, (5) educational facilities and recreational activities (6) rituals and crafts, (7) developmental programmes undertaken in the past and underway by the villagers and by governmental agencies (8) village factions and land tenure system (9) other matters such as important socio-religious activities.

The survey of receptivity also included the study of attitude of people towards the project.

Based on the survey a seasonal, occupational, agricultural, and health chart entitled, "what goes on round the year in Barpali" was prepared as a programme planning strategy and a teaching device for enlightenment of the technical and extension staff about local situation. The chart shows seasonal disease profile and correlated activities in the fields of agriculture, vegetable growing, weaving and festivals. The attitude survey revealed two important issues which were considered while choosing a few villages from a lot of 77 villages to begin the work. One of the attitudes expressed by the people indicated their ill feeling towards the people of coastal districts (commonly known as Cutchiks). The other attitude was related to a wrong notion that the project would take the leprosy patients away from their villages to some leprosy in a distant place or eliminate them by shooting them down.

Two main criteria were evolved on the basis of the survey by which the first batch of villages, where the receptivity of people to the technical assistance programmes would be most successful.

1. The villages which were chiefly composed of owner-cultivators, where few labourers and no absentee landlords, were selected.

2. The villages having a preponderance of Brahmin and Kulta castes which were more suspicious than others were excluded from the first batch of villages. However after careful consideration one typical Brahmin village and one Kulta (an agricultural caste) village were chosen and included in the first group of nine villages for comparison of performance of work in these villages with other villages.

Broadly the programmes of work which were taken up in the field of public health and medicine are listed below.

1. Public health services: safe water, sanitation, and fly control, malaria control, immunization, maternal and child health, control of leprosy.

2. Medical services, including curative clinic and village health clinics in outlying villages, prepaid medical services, improved nutrition, treatment of leprosy.

3. Teaching of village workers and health workers and of villagers in schools, and home visits by health workers; and

4. Experimental work in adapting medical knowledge and techniques to local conditions.

## PROGRAMMES OF MATERNAL AND CHILD CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

### 1. Malnutrition and nutritional diseases

Preventive medicine rather than curative work was the main emphasis in the project plan. But as it became known that there were doctors in the project people from near and far began to visit them for consultation and help. Gradually stories about dramatic results of treatment spread and the number of patients increased. From a humanitarian point of view it was not possible to turn them down.

In view of this it was necessary to set apart one day in a week for general clinic. Apart from several weaknesses and disadvantages of getting tied up to curative practices the clinic served two important purposes. It provided the project with an entry point through which the staff came closer to the people and gained their confidence. Moreover the medical staff were able to gather first hand knowledge about the health needs of the area through clinical

Very soon it became known to the doctor that nutritional deficiency was the root cause of many diseases prevalent in the area. The bench-mark survey of diet and food habits of people which was carried out by the anthropologist in the early phase of the project revealed deficient calorie intake and nutritional lack in the food of the people. Of all the deficiencies protein lack was most conspicuous. Milk which is an important source of animal protein was in short supply and many superstitious beliefs and misguided injunctions of local medicine-men and quacks stood in the way of its use. The project met this cheapest form of first class protein by importing bulk quantities of skim milk powder, and made it available to the patients at cost price and later on through a local shop-keeper at a controlled price of about 22 cents a pound. Other avenues such as upbreeding of poultry, and goat and cattle rearing and pisciculture were introduced in the villages to achieve the same end. The agricultural staff made vigorous effort to expand vegetable growing in the area. All these attempts yielded results sooner or later and the diet of the people was improved to some extent.

Through constant persuasion and sustained education the universal prejudice against the drinking of milk which was articulated as "milk will catch cold", was wiped out of the mind of the people. The remarks of the project staff which proved effective in getting the milk accepted were a reference to Krishna's habit of drinking profused quantity of milk without catching cold. The doctors insisted milk as the mainstay in all cases of malnutrition and with the help of skim milk powder and multivitamins could cure many nutritional diseases, improve the feeling of well-being, strengthen the power



of resistance and keep the debilitating and deteriorating effects of malnutrition in check. For many nutritional diseases the project doctors earned a reputation of being the only ones who were able to cure such maladies. One of such diseases is what was locally called *Machhe Akhi* (fish eye), a painful ulcerated callous-like thickening on pressure points of feet and toes and occasionally seen on hands. It was a sign of Vitamin A deficiency and the patients were given therapeutic doses of multivitamins and in some cases high potency Vitamin A shark liver oil.

## 2. Leprosy

Treatment of leprosy is worth mentioning. The attitude survey which is mentioned earlier, revealed the fear in people that the project would eradicate this disease by cruel means. Findings of such surveys and orientation in social customs, cultural patterns, beliefs and value system prevalent in the locality made the doctors feel the necessity for adopting a new method of treatment which would be suited to the local socio-cultural conditions.

On consultation with the leprologists at the Tropical Medicine School in Calcutta the doctors found out that the former were not in favour of allowing leprose stand in queue with others in a crowded outdoor department.

The western manual of public health advocates the isolation of all cases in a leproserium or a leprosy colony as the approved method of controlling leprosy. The western doctors of the project who were trained in western medical schools viewed the prescribed standards of treatment unworkable in the Indian context. Their opinion in this regard is quoted below:

"This (referring to western manual of Public Health-author's) may be adequate, for control of the disease in the west, but it is quite impractical in India where the picture is entirely different. The cultural pattern and superstition of the villagers together with the very high incidence of the disease and the extremely limited resources necessitate a different approach. Any means of control of the disease in India that calls for the uprooting of the individual and transplanting him outside his village can never hope to succeed, for in this circumstance the patient will hide his disease until it can be hidden no longer. The

evidence seems to indicate that on DDS most patients are rendered non-infectious or relatively so in about six months. This being the case it is possible to eliminate the reservoir of infection without isolation. This is the practical public health approach".

Following the local conditions the doctors of the project undertook to treat the leprosy patients at the clinic. They allowed the patients to attend the general clinic and observed no distinction between the leprosy patients and other patients. Leprosy was one disease among others. The leprosy patient did not have to stand under a towel or in a special queue that would attract attention. The medicines supplied to the patients was diaminodiphenyl sulphone (DDS) and Vitamin B in the form of yeast. Skim milk powder was also supplied to them. Other medications included haematinic multivitamins or biochemi-cerbations which were supplied when needed. DDS was provided on payment of a fee of Rs. 100 a month whereas other medicines were supplied free of any charges. In the first three years as many as seven hundred cases were treated and rendered symptom free. After they felt hopeful they were encouraged to resume their occupations.

## 3. Venereal diseases and sterility

Another field where equally startling and miraculous results were achieved was the treatment for venereal diseases and consequent sterility. Both syphilis and gonorrhea were common in the area and the devastating effects of syphilis were repeated abortions, still births and neonatal deaths. The health workers contact with village women revealed that even in many well-to-do and respectable families such devastating effects on pregnancy were of repeated occurrence. These people did not come forward for medical aid and it was difficult to approach such cases. Any attempt to get details was resisted and any health worker approached a house where still births were of repeated occurrence she was not allowed in and dismissed in a minute's time declaring that everybody was well in the house. Sometimes the front door of the house was closed while the health worker was standing outside and this was done to express resentment.

After such initial huddles and episodes were overcome a woman of a rich and influential family of brass workers caste who had lost many children but longed for one to keep the progeny going was picked up with difficulty. Both herself

and her husband were treated simultaneously with penicillin. She was pregnant when the treatment was started. As a special precaution she was given five extra doses during her last month. When the time for delivery approached the health workers attended the case and helped her. The usual practice of employing village dhal was completely eliminated in this case. A healthy life baby weighing 10 pounds an unusual event in the child bearing history of the family was born and there was joy and smile in everybody's face. It was necessary to treat the baby during its first month of life with additional penicillin.

The mother followed not only all advice related to diet and mother and child care but also missed no chance of attending the clinic for routine checkup. News of this case spread throughout the area, the number of such cases increased and the result was a substantial number of live births where previously the shocking still births pervaded the scene. In one place the lady doctor has written, "we did not lose any babies of mothers so treated in pregnancy so far as we know". A cure for sterility was not only a humanitarian act in the sense that a child in a childless home was a matter of joy and security especially in old age but it also enabled the health workers and medical staff to reach the heart of women, the most neglected and vulnerable section of the population and alleviate their suffering.

#### 4. Water-seal Latrine

Diseases like dysentery, typhoid, cholera and other types of worm infected enteric troubles are most common in the project area. People have no idea about germ theory and contamination, and therefore are not in a position to believe that the enteric troubles are due to their habit of drinking water from polluted sources and of defecating in open fields. In an effort of improving rural environmental sanitary conditions the Barga Village Service designed a low cost latrine and developed a pump well for village use.

The water-seal latrine requires an area of about 20 Sq. ft. for installation, including the fence around it. It is necessary to place near it a large earthenware vessel or an empty kerosin tin containing water to use for flushing and personal cleansing after use. A small pot or tin is also necessary for washing after using. A broom is needed to sweep the surroundings and sometimes the inner part of the latrine. After using the latrine it requires flushing to push the

excreta out into the pit over which the latrine has been installed. The average amount of water required to flush the latrine is about two liters. Pit diameter is 30 inches. A pit of three feet depth will last about one and a half years for a family of five members.

This latrine was devised in such a manner that villagers can have it without much expense and use it without much hardship. The cost of the latrine slab was fixed at Rs. 7 by the project which started manufacturing the slabs in its own campus. The latrine requires a small space for installation and the fence can be raised around it by using branches and twigs of trees. It requires much less water for flushing and is odor free and needs no special scavenging and cleaning.

The project in its sanitary engineering section manufactured water-seal latrines and sold out to villagers, schools, governmental offices and private agencies. At the end of the third year a survey was carried out to find out whether or not the latrines sold to private individuals, families and schools in the project area were actually installed and used, and if not used to advantage, to determine what were the resistances to the use of this latrine. Out of 138 water-seal latrines sold in 23 villages a random sample of 90 families, individuals and groups using 88 latrines in these 23 villages was included in the survey.

The survey indicated that 48 per cent of all families studied (38.6 per cent of village families studied) were using these latrines regularly; 16.6 per cent of all families were using the latrine irregularly; the remainder of the latrines were not in use at the time of the study. Men and children were using the latrine more frequently, while the smaller number of women using the latrine was attributed particularly to their custom of going out to the fields in groups, for bathing and toilet activities, combined with social gathering and gossiping. Lack of understanding of the proper method of flushing the latrine (requiring an excess amount of water) and lack of readily available sources of water, were important causes of resistance to the use of the latrine. A number of villagers thought that the latrines were unhygienic and many people were unaccustomed to use this type of latrine. Inadequate follow-up by the village workers was responsible for many latrines being used inadequately or lying unused.

## 5. Pump well

A similar attempt was made by the project to provide a source of drinking water which would not be contaminated. Both technical and extension staff of the project tried their best to educate the people in the use of uncontaminated water. Wells and tanks at present in the area were subjected to contamination and there was no possibility of providing pipe water in the near future. In such a situation the project designed well tanks and a pump in which water was drawn by means of a pump and there was no access by means of the usual rope and bucket. It was also the intention of the project to encourage villagers to contribute free labour as well as become involved in planning out of debt is

Before the programme was implemented a survey was conducted in some villages to find out the sources of drinking water, types of wells, ownership of such wells, materials used for construction, availability of materials in the locality, people's participation, uses of wells and approximate cost for digging and other expenses for lining or stone packing, perlat and platform, etc., attitude of people towards well water and past experiences of success and failure in well-digging activities. Based on the data the project took up the programme in such villages where it was most likely to succeed. When it was successful in one or two villages people from other villages came forward on their own to have pump wells in their villages. In some villages different wards competed with each other and had each a pump well. This type of pump well was not only popular in the project area but there was also a demand from many government departments for installing such wells in their respective institutions and organizations.

The enthusiasm shown by people in the extension of the work and installation of hand pump was not marked in the use of water from such wells. People continued to draw their supply from the same polluted source in spite of intensive propaganda "Drink well water and save your life through personal approach and audio visual shows".

In many places the handle of the pump broke down and the pump was left unused even after replacement. The valve of the pump being made of leather caused ritual pollution of the water. People thought that the valve was made of cow hide and the contact of the valve with

water polluted it and rendered unacceptable. In small but heterogeneous villages where it was not possible to test more than one well on economic grounds the harajias were not allowed by the clean castes to use the well. It is the women who fetch water for all domestic purposes. The custom prevalent in the area is that the women go out in groups once in the morning and once in the evening to the tank side, stand to the call of nature, take bath and fetch water. This social get-together is terminated by the use of pump and of latrine. Taking everything into consideration it was evident that such factors as caste system, ritual pollution, old habit, caste, mechanical defect, etc. stood jointly in the way of adoption of this

## HOPE FOR FUTURE

An overall picture of the directed change introduced in the peasant community by Barpali Village Service in the field of public health during 1962-63 shows how important and useful Anthropology was in the social and technical assistance project. The critics are often blamed for their resistance to such well-intentioned developmental programmes. The technicians, experts in most cases do not see any relevance of contributions of anthropologists and other social scientists in developmental projects.

This ignorance is largely due to defective training on the part of the technicians. One of the most important social principles which is not known to the technical experts is that human beings react to situations in ways which are dictated by their culturally determined environment in which they live. They act accordingly in terms of that culturally established knowledge. No human society whether it is a receiver or a donor is exception to this rule.

The purposive anthropological studies which were conducted at Barpali have clearly revealed an interplay of multiplicity of facilitating and inhibiting factors. A particular factor tends to be non-resistant in one situation, but it becomes militant in another situation. Certain factors are difficult of detection and prediction in the implementation stage of a programme, but they suddenly come to surface and manifest in full form when the programme is ready for use.

A detailed first-hand knowledge about the social structure and alignment, cultural pattern and value system has been found very useful to

most clear of many mistakes which are likely to be committed in programme-planning and implementation for want of such knowledge. More of such opportunities for BVS as were provided by the AFSC will meet two urgent

needs, one relating to the building up of a data bank of anthropology in public health and the other to the strengthening of co-ordination between social scientists and medical practitioners for the development of people

#### LIST OF REPORTS ABOUT BARPALI VILLAGE SERVICE

Abbott, Edwin. Notes on Work in the Field of Curative Medicine at Barpali. AFSC mimeographed report, 1955.

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# Concept of debt among the Dongria Kondhs

P. S. Das Patnaik

The subject of primitive economy has not been popular among the social scientists as yet. Very little work has so far been done by the economists and anthropologists in this field. Indeed, one of the important aspects of primitive economy has also not been properly investigated.

All primitive societies have some sort of economic organisation. What all societies have in common are that they make use of natural resources, technology, division of labour, use of markets and some form of money. But the specific institutionalisation of these may vary radically.

The credit system and its concept has not been properly attended to both by the economists and anthropologists though the credit structure is studied in a stray manner among the aboriginals of Australia, New Guinea and Africa. Credit as it functions in the ordinary and usual exchange of a society having a relatively complex economic structure has not been studied systematically as yet. In India, it is almost a virgin field for research. To quote Henskowski: "Borrowing and indebtedness are frequently encountered in non-literate societies as aids to business enterprise of various sorts." (Henskowski 1962). It is a challenging problem for the scientists. The indebtedness, the philanthropies and the social workers that the tribals are heavily indebted and they are outright exploited by the middlemen at the cost of their smallness and ignorance.

In the year 1966, while undertaking a study on the school-going children among the Dongria Kondhs, one of the primitive sections of the Kondh community, I had an opportunity to observe the credit relationship between the two communities, the Dongria Kondh and the Doms,

the Scheduled Caste community. About thirty-six persons belonging to both the communities confronted the then Special Officer, Tribal and Rural Welfare Department, Orissa to discuss the debt position of the Dongria Kondhs and to liquidate their outstanding debts. During the discussions, the Dongria Kondhs put forth claims and allegations against the Doms doubling the letters on Petition (cheats). From this, an onlooker would get an impression that both communities are, as it, at daggers drawn with each other. But to my utter surprise, it was found out that the same Dongria Kondh who was so animated in his contention against the Doms, when approached the same persons for loan on the strength of the relationship of Ser (bond) and Kenda (debt). This peculiar behaviour poses a problem which attracted me to undertake the present study. Another factor of attraction was introduction of Purchase-sale and Fair-Price Shop Scheme in the Dongria area. The scheme was introduced primarily to protect the tribals against the exploitation by the money-lenders. It was believed that by introducing such a scheme the tribals would take advantage of it and get fair-price for their products. It was anticipated that this would eradicate indebtedness from among them and ensure a better economic footing. But the findings were just opposite and the objectives could not be attained as the Dongria Kondhs could not be conclusively persuaded to cut off themselves from the network of their traditional

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In view of the specific limitation of the problem the following hypotheses were formulated to organise the study. First, the credit relationships of the Dongria Kondhs encompass a complete series of activities both economic and non-economic. Secondly the concept of

debt has a different cultural connotation for the Dongria Kondh. Which is to be discussed here in this article. They do not go by the modern concept of debt. Anything borrowed either in cash or kind is not considered to be a loan. Similarly anything extracted in exchange of this temporary help either through fair or foul means is not considered to be undue for the Domb. These feelings are the outcome of a network of symbiotic relationships established since past

The reciprocal relationship has been historically evolved and has structurally resolved the apparently conflicting interests of the two communities. The Dongria Kondh economy is so organized that the allocation of labour and land, the organization of work in production process and the disposition of produced goods are expressions of underlying kinship obligation, tribal affiliation and religious and moral duty. In such an economy the bulk of resources and products are transacted in non-market spheres, where their economy different from our own are realised, the concepts employed are different to their structures or performances. Indebtedness, which is an economic behaviour is largely governed by different principles of organization, different conditions, different rationalizations of economic mechanism and different moral values for judging worth and performance. This economic transaction cannot be understood without the social obligation. The value economic motive—why the Dongria Kondhs borrow from the Domba alone but not from other sources is only due to certain non-economic relationships which motivate the Dongria Kondh to borrow from the Domba. The non-economic motives are primarily incorporated into the economic model when we analyse the relationship between the two communities. As Oruz says "Economic model and its cultural support and non-economic activities" (Oruz 1927). However, to analyse the credit relationship, it is but indispensable to analyze the natural interaction of moral, cultural and economic activities, institutional roles and relationships within the society—the entire social process.

The vast area of 250 square miles, studded with sky-scraping hills, surrounded by forested areas is called the Niyamgir hills—the abode of the Dongria Kondh, one of the most backward tribes of Orissa. The Niyamgir hills ranges are situated in the Bissam-Cuttack police station of Gunupur and Rayagada Subdivisions in the district of Keonjhar. Almost a century and half

ago, the British officials (Macpherson 1852, Campbell 1884) featured this tribe very prominently for their heinous practices of human infanticide and human sacrifice. Another scheduled caste, locally known as the Domb also inhabit with the Dongria Kondhs. Almost all the villages are exclusively inhabited by these two communities. The Domba are immigrants from the plains of the districts of Balasore and Keonjhar and have permanently settled in the Dongria Kondh area.

The Dongria Kondhs are primarily shifting cultivators. Other than millets and cereals which they produce from their swidden, they are also resorted to horticultural. Almost all of their economic activities, social relationships and religious practices are integrally connected with shifting cultivation.

Indebtedness is the most acute and complicated problem among the Dongria Kondh. Ordinarily they could glean and reap adequate amount of food materials to live in primitive existence. This balance with nature is seriously dislocated by the economic process, the dominant feature of which is indebtedness.

Since time immemorial, the Dongria Kondhs are being perpetually exploited by the Domba resulting in a severe deficit in the budget of individual families. The accumulation of indebtedness now outstrips the economic input of the indebted families. A small survey of 22 families during the year 1982-83 reveals that the per capita annual loan (including both current and old) is Rs 72.90 on y

#### A case study

Wadeka Paji of village Gertoli borrowed Rs. 6/- and 8/- Manes (1 Manes=1 Kilogram) of Kola rice in the month of July 1981 from Sitola Basu of the same village. The purpose was to repay his outstanding loan which he had taken from Palka Kundapani, a Domb of the same village. In the year 1979, Paji had incurred loan from the Domb in order to meet the expenses towards a ceremonial occasion on account of his ailing child. Against this loan he had mortgaged three of his jackfruit trees.

When Paji delayed the repayment, Palka got annoyed and demanded 2 more jackfruit trees with fruits towards interest around three upon since 1979. To repay the loan of Kundapani, he approached his own cousin, Basu and borrowed Rs. 6/- Basu extended the loan with an under-

standing that Pak should repay it in the next harvest in the shape of kind with an interest of 25 per cent rate of interest.

Papi gave back the loan to the Domb but not the interest for which he could not release his 6 lackfruits.

In the year 1962, Paji paid back 12½ Manas (or 12½ Kilograms) of Koshi-rice to Basu, he could as per the contract but could not pay the cash loan. In exchange therefore, he gave 6 number of plantain trees.

In the year 1883, when Kandepeni demanded interest, Paji gave 2 more jackfruit trees towards interest. On enquiry it was ascertained that Paji died in the same year and his son Wodaka Drimba paid interest for one year only to Kandepeni and got released 2 of his jackfruit trees.

However in English Dictionary, debt means "something owed to another a liability, an obligation". In Encyclopaedia Britannica debt is defined as, "a definite sum due by one person to another". In general use it means that something not owned by the user but temporarily taken from another for use with the understanding of returning the same either with an excess over it or without any excess. To the Dharma Konde anything taken for use and given back after some time is not considered as debt. It is rather conceived as a kind of mutual give-and-take relationship. The case cited above makes further clear the usual concept of debt among them. Some of the salient features of which are detailed below.

1. A loan is sought when needed, loans are contracted when a person is not able to meet his normal requirements from his own income or when unforeseen events demand extra expenditure.
2. A loan is extended either in cash or in kind or both.
3. The standard for determining the time limit of a loan depends on the creditworthiness of the debtor and the lender's standing of the creditor.
4. (a) The rate of interest is determined in every individual case by mutual agreement between the two parties. It depends on the personal relationship between the two parties.

(d) In case of a breach of contract or if one becomes defaulter the rate of interest is enhanced from the rate originally contracted. This

enhanced rate of interest is connected either in cash or in kind but in most cases in kind. The Konds creditor is here, towards another Konds defaulter whereas the Domb creditor in no case affords to be liable towards any of his debtors.

(c) It is also evident that instead of interest being charged, an excess (Faide) is collected in kind along with the principal amount. It so happens when the creditor is a Domb and the debtor is a Kondh. In such cases the creditor mixes a pre-occupation of his profit and accordingly contracts assets to be mortgaged. The debtor too, does not rely to part with when he or she possesses such assets. The feeling is that when the debtor is immediately helped, the creditor must be helped in the long run.

(c) The debtor may be exempted from paying the interest in case (1) he can please the creditor with humility or established good relationship be it the *Kondh* or the *Demb*.

8. (a) Almost all the loans are sought on oral contracts. No written document is maintained either by the Kordh or the Domb creditor. Records are maintained only for the transactions with statutory credit agencies like Banks and LAMPS.

4) The Domb creditor does not maintain any records for two reasons: firstly in the absence of a written document he could exploit the liberal Kerdh and secondly in the changing context of growing awareness his identity as money-lender can never be disclosed.

8 (a) All loans are obtained for a social purpose which is considered as urgent in nature in almost all cases, the purpose is duly reviewed by the debtor to the creditor.

d) The rate of interest also varies according to the abundance of the requirements. The more urgent the need, the more the interest. The Lomb creditor takes advantage of the urgency of the Koudh. This is because selling is considered as a reciprocal obligation by the Koudh creditor where as for the Lomb it is an economic transaction governed by profit and loss.

7. Jeasle personal assets like cropped field, partitions, trees of economic value are kept mortgaged by the creditor for advancing a loan. The creditors in general and the Deobh creditors in particular make use of these mortgaged lands and even a living which is partly the mainstay of the life of the Deobh.



8. If the debtor is not thoroughly known to the creditor or the creditor casts doubt on the integrity of the debtor, personal surety is sought for extending a loan. This practice is more frequent among the Kondh debtor and creditor than among the Konds creditor and Domb creditor. It is because, the Domb creditor firstly knows the assets of the debtor and he can collect his amount from the Kondh even in the worst situation and secondly he wants to keep the transaction secret between him and the debtor. Whereas the Kondh creditor when extends loan to another Kondh he keeps in mind the fact that personal surety is must for he cannot rely his own men as they are bound to one another in such a way that at some or other level there may arise a rift between them.

9. Advance payment by the creditor to the debtor for any purpose is also considered as loan.

10. Repayment is made if loan is taken. Payment is made before or just after the expiry of the term. As is wanted, repayment should be made in full but not in instalments which is considered to be a defaulting act by the debtor. Recovery by instalments is not grievously viewed but the debtor thereby loses his own right over his loaned out property. On the other hand the creditor goes to a favourable position by not losing his claim over the mortgaged property and goes on enjoying the benefits for years together until the final repayment is made.

11. A compound rate of interest (Faide) in excess of the repayment of loan is also given by the debtor while repaying loan. It is taken forcibly without the consent of the debtor.

12. Loan is also brought from the Government Agency. It is extended mainly in cash.

13. Government loan is interest free for the Dongria Kondh.

14. A Bond-spinner is executed by the Government before extending loan. Loan is given on written contract.

15. Government loan is given before a witness who belongs to the debtor's community.

16. An asset register is maintained by the local Government agency against which loans are advanced to the Dongria Kondh.

Thus all these above mentioned transactions constitute a 'Debt' for the Dongria Kondh.

So, on analysing loan according to the Dongria Kondh can be broadly defined as follows—Loan embraces all types of transactions whether cash or in kind which a person brings in or his requirement either from a Domb, a non-tribal creditor or from a tribal creditor or from the Government Agency for a specific period and for a specific purpose either orally or executing written document, with interest or without paying any interest, either by keeping mortgages or without keeping any mortgages, either by giving excess (Faide) or without giving any excess, either by personal surety or without any personal surety and must be repaid within the stipulated time either partially or fully or in excess without breaching the contract. If these elements are not present in any transaction the Dongria Kondh is reluctant to accept it as debt.

So far as the legal definition of loan is concerned, it is as follows—An advance whether of money or in kind or interest made by a money-lender having dealt the transaction on a document bearing interest computed in respect of past liability any such transaction which in substance, is a loan (Driss money lending Act, Section 2 of Act of 1969—as amended by Act XVII and XVI of 1949 and XIV of 1951 and Regulation V of 1945 and 1961 and Rules up-to-date). What amounts under the Act—(i) An advance in money or in kind, (ii) The advance must carry interest and (iii) There must be a condition of repayment.

If the conception of loan as prevalent among the Dongria Kondh is compared with that of legal definition of loan, we find that loan according to the Dongria Kondh is an advance either in cash or in kind but it is necessarily not extended always with interest. In the Kondh society loan is also extended in free of interest when the transaction takes place within the Kondh community and between the Kondh and the Government Agency. Secondly, no written execution is made when the transaction takes place within the community with outsiders that is, the Domb excepting of course with the Government Agency. Thirdly, a condition of repayment though involved in the transaction, is not legally followed or strictly adhered to, viz. specially when the transaction is made with the Domb. Thus, the tribal conception of loan is different from the legal conception of loan.

However, the Dongria Kondhs have a limited view of including loan which is confined to their own society and culture. The bi-ethnic

community living in the hills has further narrowed the scope of understanding seen in the context of wider society.

The Dongria Kondh has his way of consideration of incurring debt within the bounds of the socio-cultural ties among them and between them and the Domb and nobody else. That is why the Kondh is reluctant to approach any

other Agency for loan as he considers it undignified and undesirable. The Kondh believes in permanence of socio-economic ties than the temporary economic relationship with the creditor. Without the socio-cultural consideration which is of paramount importance for their life and living in the rugged hills far away from the modern society the Kondh is not willing to seek loan from alien agencies.

# A glimpse of social life of the Lanjia Saora

B. B. Mohanty

## Saora Land

The Lanja Saora, a section of the great Saora tribe are one of the primitive tribes of Orissa. The tribe 'Saora' or 'Sabara' is known to all in India as mention of it is made in our ancient literatures. It would perhaps mean that the Aryans designated all the jungle tribes with which they came in contact as Sabaras. Cunningham has corroborated that an ancient tribes whenever the name Sabara is mentioned, a hint of the aboriginals who are now called Kolams. Nevertheless the Sabara entered over a vast territory from Uttar Pradesh in the west up to Orissa in the East. The hill Kharis of Dhalbhum call themselves as Sabaras, and the Jaung of Kaptiphar don't hesitate to trace their origin from the Sabara. From these references it is rather difficult to accurately delineate the geographical dimensions of Sabara tribe.

The Saoras are mostly concentrated in the Parichemundi subdivision of Ganjam district and Pottingi area of Gunupur subdivision of Koraput district. This is one of the most accessible parts of the State of Orissa. Here ranges of hills criss-cross the area, small streams and rivulets flow in all directions around the valleys, nature with its endowments present in its naked revelations, tigers and maulers intersect free movement, money lenders and petty traders move from dawn to dusk, and plains men are afield of spending nights. Elwin has rightly described the Saora country as one of the most picturesque lands in the country. But all its beauty is marred by unhealthy climate. Anopheles mosquitoes are plenty in the area, and fever is a common feature of the land. Added to it are the habits of Saora, who throw all their dirt and debris

on the village roads. The excreta of the pigs and dirt emit foul odour and provide breeding grounds of the germs.

The high hill ranges donot permit opening up of new roads. There are mainly five principle roads, (a) from Berhampur to Parichemundi, (b) Panskhemund to Serango, (c) Gunupur to Pottingi, (d) Khajuripada to Nuepada, (e) from Chelligada to Ramgiri. All these roads are fairly good roads which are open throughout the year.

The hills of the Saora land are between 3000- 4000' in altitude. On the North Serango and Amapada high lands stand as great barriers. Mahendragiri and Devagir stand as two posts. The winding hill towards the South follows the route. Bad Doo and Ratan ranges forming Jdayagiri area. Down below is the Pottingi valley, with terraced fields and patches of forests. In Jdayagiri area there is still some thick patches of forests. The road from Jdayagiri to Parima and Jhalersingi and Paimal to Nungada pass through thick patches. But in other parts forests have considerably vanished. The hills look desolate due to expansion of shifting cultivation and the thick woods which once harboured varieties of wild animals have thinned down. Broadly, the vegetation is of moist type in which SHOREA, RHINALA-ADINA series are common. As Sal is the vigorous coppicer and regenerates abundantly in the clearings it dominates over other exceptional species. Besides that there are various types of grasses and creepers seen in the forests.

The soil of this region is determined by relief vegetation and parent rock materials. It is

classified into aridic or ferrallitic soil formed under tropical rainy climates with a pronounced dry season (Gausson, Lagre & Viar, 1967).

The bio-climate of the area is hot and humid. The whole year can broadly be divided into three seasons. The Winter starts from the month of November and continues up to February. The Summer starts from March and lasts up to June. The Rainy season begins from July and continues till September. May is the hottest month of the year, mean daily maximum temperature being 32.3°C (90.1°F) and the mean daily minimum temperature 26.8°C. With the onset of monsoons in the third week of June the day temperature gradually decreases and the night temperature continues as high in Summer. At the end of September temperature decreases progressively and rapidly. December is the coldest month with mean daily minimum temperature of 18.2°C (64.7°F) and the mean daily maximum temperature of 26.9°C (80.4°F).

The average rainfall of the area is 1295.6mm (51"). The rainfall increases from the plains to the hills as the month progresses. The South-West monsoons come to the area by the second week of June and the entire area gets maximum rainfall during this period. August is the rainier month and the average rainy days in a year are 55 days.

### Population

The Sacras are found in almost all the districts of the State. However, they are mainly concentrated in the districts of Gadch and Koreput. The total population of the Sacras in different census years is presented below:

Census year	Population of Sacra tribe
1961	1,61,401
1961	.. 3,11,614
1971	3,42,767

These above census figures show that the tribe is on the increase. Within a span of ten years from 1961 to 1971 the tribe has registered a growth rate of about 10 per cent. The total number of literates among the Sacras are 34,802 according to Census 1971 and the percentage of literates to total tribal population is only 10.16.

### Divisions

The Sacras have atleast got 10 divisions depending upon their nature of occupations. These distinguished castes are: (1) Lamba (2) Jado (3) Mane (4) Rakas (5) Sada, (6) Kunkal (7) Awa (8) Jwan (9) Kanchor, (10) Kurma. Besides there are Sudha and Jai Sacras and Jara Sabaras who speak Oriya, and Kamboo Sacras who speak Telugu. These sections have become separate unit by endogamy and according to their particular occupation, they are considered high and low by the other sections. The Jado Sacras are not magicians, as the name denotes, but are treated low as they do not receive the cow. They live in Badkunda area. The Mane Sacras of Ajaygada mainly work on brass and sell the products to other Sacras. The Rakas who live in Rayagada motts, don't eat animal flesh. The Kunkal or Fankula Sacras are basket makers and work on bamboo. They exchange and sell the baskets for food grains and other household articles. The Awa Sacras are considered low like Doms as they eat beef. The Jwan Sacras eat date-palms and are found in Jirang and Ramgiri areas. The Kanchor of Badkunda are good archers and the Kurma Sacras are shifting cultivators. In addition to these sections there are Kumbhis who are potters, the Gantar who work on bell metal and the Lwar are blacksmiths. Of all these sections the Lanja, as they are called by others, are in a most primitive stage. They are called Lanja because of the manner of putting on the loin-cloth in which a long tail hangs behind. They are also called Mulus as they live on the uplands or Mals. The Lanja group is numerically superior than other sections.

**Physical characteristics, language and dress**  
The somatopsic features as found among the Sacras are as follows:

- Height—medium
- Skin colour—brown to light brown
- Build—slender
- Head form—long
- Face—long generally some with marked zygoma
- Forehead—high and ascending
- Nose profile—straight
- Nose shape—broad
- Eyes—narrow but not oblique
- Head hair—plenty wavy to deep wavy
- Body hair—scanty

The language of the Saora belong to munda group of language as distinguished from the Dravidian and Aryan linguistic families. So, linguistically, the Saora stand apart from the Koya and other Dravidian speaking tribes. The Saora language is very difficult and peculiar in its structure which is called 'sora'. The late Gidugu Ramamurti Pantulu has published a dictionary of the Saora language.

During older days, the women folk used to wear just a skirt and the men only loin cloth. These textiles were woven in those days by the Dom from yarn hand spun by the Saora themselves. This type of dress pattern are found now-a-days in the most interior areas of Sagada and Pottasingi valleys.

### Settlement pattern

The settlement pattern of Saora villages do not conform to any definite pattern. It is mostly of compact type as the houses are built on different uneven terraces on the hill slopes. The houses are jumbled up here and there and narrow lanes and alleys run up and down the terraces between houses.

Now-a-days, the traditional houses have undergone several transformations. However, in remote and inaccessible areas the old type of houses are seen. Generally, the houses are rectangular in shape built over a high plinth. The size of the house is 4-4 m<sup>2</sup> X 4-1 m<sup>2</sup> and the height of the house is approximately 3 m. The floor is made up of beaten earth and the walls are made up of mainly bamboo or wooden pillars plastered with mud. The walls of the house are coloured with red earth. The roof of the house is made up of bamboo and wooden rods which are proportionately tied with aisi creeper and is thatched by a variety of grass collected from forest.

The Saora houses are single roomed and inside the room there is a big shed with strong stands covering three-fourth of the room. On this shelf all the articles of the house starting from foodgrains to small ribbits are kept. The open space inside the room is meant for hunking grins and for dining. The hearth is always placed in far corner of the house adjoining to a well. The inner walls of the house are decorated with ikons in honour of their Gods and ancestors.

### Economic life

The economic life of the Saora mainly centres around agriculture. They practice two types of agriculture—wetting cultivation in the hill slope and terrace cultivation in the gentle slope at the foot hill. They supplement their income from land by foraging and food gathering. Mango, Mahua and Mushrooms constitute important collections in seasons. Minor forest produce such as Kerani and Tola seeds which are extracted for oil, grass used for making broom-sticks and many types of medicinal herbs which they collect during their leisure time meet their own needs at home and form an important supplementary source of income.

The wild animals has become scarce as a result of shrinkage of forests and therefore hunting has become an irregular feature among the Saora.

The Saora are the best terraced cultivators. The terraced fields in which water flows throughout the year are locally called *saraba* and are exclusively meant for paddy cultivation. The upper terraces which are dry is locally called as *Jyrom* and used for cultivating Ragi (eleusine corocana) Biri (Phaseolum mungo) and Kuthi (dolichos biflorus).

The terraces are built right up the beds of the hill streams and extends many hundreds of feet from the depths of the valleys to the hill-slopes and in some places rising upto the hill-tops. The terraces are works of great engineering skill. The platform of each terrace is flat throughout and the fall of each terrace is stone packed. The construction of the terraces is so ingeniously and skillfully made that no soil is carried down with the water that flows from the higher terraces to the lower.

The terrace fields are privately owned and handed down from father to sons. These are valuable assets to the Saora and sometimes mortgaged to local money and paddy lenders who are mostly of 'Pana' community.

Two varieties of paddy are grown in the terrace fields, early variety called *Amadahan* and late variety called *Badaohan*. The

extender of agricultural operations connected with terrace fields are given below:

**Agricultural operations of terrace cultivation**

Early variety (month)	Name of Work	Late variety (month)
(1)	(2)	(3)
December	Preparation of seed bed	June
February	Transplantation	July
April	.. Weeding	.. September
May-June	Harvesting	.. November-December

Ragi is cultivated in dry fields. No manure is applied in these fields. The transplantation of ragi starts after the first shower of rains and weeding and harvesting in the months of July and October respectively.

The Saoras grow pumpkin, cucumber, bean, ginger, tobacco, maize and ginger in their kitchen gardens.

The Saoras observe certain rituals in connection with terrace cultivation. The principal one is connected with transplantation. Before, the seedlings are pulled up for transplantation, a ritual is performed in seed bed. On this occasion dried fish and fowl are offered to a deity called Jara. The belief is that the deity will be pleased and protect the plants from pests and ensure a good harvest.

**Shifting cultivation**

In addition to wet or terrace cultivation the Saoras practice shifting cultivation quite extensively. The shifting cultivation is known by the term "Bagada chera" among them and each and every family has a few patches of swiddens either in the hill slopes, or at the hill-tops yielding mainly minor millets and pulses.

Among the Saoras the swiddens are owned individually and are handed down on hereditary basis although there is no legal document in support of their ownership rights. They conceive of themselves not as belonging to their ancestral swiddens but rather as owning them. In their attitude there is of the proud possessiveness of the land owners in the plains who vigorously

defend their right against any illegal encroachment. The land itself, the timber and fruit trees, and game animals are as dear as life to the Saoras. Generally speaking the focal point of all activities in the Saora society is land and the root cause of Saora misery is land alienation.

Every Saora village has a well defined boundary and its inhabitants carry on shifting cultivation in the hills located within the village boundary. Some hills are close to the village and others are at a distance. Traditionally the hills are distributed on the basis of Biruda or extended family. Members of a particular Biruda used to have swiddens exclusively on a hill and no outsider was allowed to share the hill for shifting cultivation. But with the increase in population and outmigration there have been changes noted in the pattern. Today cases of outsiders cultivating hills belonging to a Biruda other than their own are not unknown.

A piece of land is used for cultivation for two to three years when successively different crops are sown. Then it is abandoned so that it could recuperate. A mixed crop of cereals, minor millets and pulses such as *Eleusine coracana*, *penicum lilare* and *penicum italicum*, *sorghum vagante*, *penicetum typhaloidum*, *cajanus cajan* and *dorichos biflorus* are grown in the swiddens. This practice of growing mixed crops is dictated by their food habit and ecological condition. The shortening of recuperative cycle, which is due to the shortage of land and population explosion, has caused more damage to the vegetation in the swiddens.

The Saoras work the soil by a piece of hoe called Guila. Unlike the Juangs of North Orissa, they do not use plough in the swiddens.

The monthly calendar of agricultural operations connected with shifting cultivation is given below:

Months	Nature of Work
November-December	Forest clearing, Debussing
March	.. Raising
April	.. Dibbling, sowing
June	.. Weeding
August-January	.. Watching harvesting

Certain rituals are attached to shifting cultivation. A ceremony is performed on the day of sowing. Before the seeds are mixed and sown, boys of the village Suro and Kindon worship the hill-Gods by offering them liquor and sacrificing fow and goat. A small ritual which involves the offering of either a fowl or a goat to the hill-God called Serutum is observed towards the end of August after Kangu is harvested. The next ceremony is two before Jang is thrashed and Kindon is harvested. On this occasion fowls are offered to the hill-Gods. Among the Suros there is a belief that if these ceremonies are performed they will get good crop from the seedlings.

The principal food of the Suros is gual (pot) prepared out of rice or egg or yam or ghanthia. Besides, they take vegetables grown in kitchen gardens and fruits, too a large variety and honey collected from forest. The non-vegetarian food is much more relished than the vegetarian diet and no festive is observed and no guest is entertained without non-vegetarian food.

#### Social Organization

The basic unit of the Suros is kin and family. Kinship is a relationship with the living as well as dead and there is a continuous process of reproduction. This process is manifested in different social organizations and the community life is permeated with this ideal. The environment in which the Suros live makes them feel helpless without a strong bond of corporate living, that gives way to corporate living. The ceremonies and festivals of the Suros are the occasions when the corporate bonds are cemented.

The smallest social unit among the Suros is family which is mostly of nuclear type. Generally family comprises parents and unmarried children. They have no exogamous, uterine clan, no phratry and no moiety. The main exogamous unit is the lineage which is called Brinda. The members of a Brinda which is based on patrilineage believe to have descended from a common male ancestor. A woman does not change her Brinda membership even after marriage.

#### Life Cycle

**Birth**—The Suros love their children very much. When a woman proves to be barren the men may marry another woman or adopt a child. The pregnant woman does her usual work up to the time of delivery. When the labour pain starts she is confined in a room which is generally a

corner of the house. At the time of delivery, an experienced sister's lady of the village or of the adjoining village officiates as midwife. She rubs the abdomen of the pregnant woman with castor oil and this process facilitates easy delivery. The umbilical cord is cut by the midwife with a sharp edged arrow. The placenta is then buried in a pit in one corner of the courtyard of the house. Then the mother and the newly born baby take bath by rapid water. The pollution period is observed for seven days. On the seventh day the woman takes bath and cooks food which is shared by the female of the house. Generally they prefer the names of the ancestors for naming the child.

**Marriage**—Lanjia marriage is not an elaborate affair. It is rather queer that the people who spend most of their wealth in the house of head-men and courtiers make use of simple marriage in such a simple way. Out of the different forms of marriage prevailing in their society viz marriage by arrangement, capture, service, the Suros have accepted the first form as the rule and others as exceptions. Polygamy in the form of polygyny is widely prevalent among them. The Suros say that if a person has more field to clear, he can go for several wives, as each of the wives can clear a patch of land, thereby enhancing the economic condition of the family.

In arranged marriages, the parents participate in the groom take initiative. Generally negotiations are made according to the status of both the parties, in some cases it is noted that a man from lower Brinda has married a woman of higher Brinda by offering more pots of liquor to bride's parents. The bride price is locally known as 'Panahel'. The amount of panahel varies between Rs. 60.00 to Rs. 80.00 and 8 pots of country liquor. The Suros generally prefer to marry the daughter of their maternal uncle. The father of the boy accompanied by some kinsman visits girl's house with a pot full of wine. If the girl's parents approve the proposal the wine pot is accepted and drunk in the presence of some important persons of the village. However in this type of marriage the opinion of the girl is also asked. Thereafter the groom's father accompanied by some kinsmen visits the bride's house on more than one occasion with one or more pots of liquor.

In one of such occasions an arrow is taken and engagement is finalised. On another day, the amount of bride price is discussed and finalised.

Bride-price is paid generally in both cash and kind. On the appointed day, groom's men visit the girl's house for betrothal and bring nine pots of wine. On this occasion, they were entertained with festive meals consisting of rice, buffalo meat and liquor. One year thereafter the bride is brought to the groom's house. The day is celebrated by dancing and drinking and from that day they are recognized as husband and wife.

The Saoro also practice both sororate and levirate forms of marriage, i.e. a man can marry his deceased wife's younger sister and woman can marry her deceased husband's younger brother.

#### Death rites

The Saoro cremate their dead. But persons dying of cholera and small-pox are buried. At cremation is a family function, some members collect wood for the pyre. The girls who are trained to act as assistants in funeral rites fetch water and prepare turmeric paste. Then the corpse is carried to the cremation ground accompanied by music, band. On the day following cremation, the family members of deceased visit the cremation ground to examine the ashes and to find out the sign of the cause of death. In the evening, a feast is held in the cremation ground and cooked with rice and bitter leaves which is shared by the members of the village. Then, after a year or two the Gura ceremony is observed. On this occasion mounds are painted and a large number of buffaloes are sacrificed. This is generally followed by three successive Kaya ceremony in every second or third year to commemorate and to

honour the deeds of that particular period. This ceremony is generally observed in the months of March or April which is generally passed as off season for agricultural operations.

#### Religion

Perhaps religion of no other tribe is so elaborate as that of the Lenge Saoro. From the old times the Saoro of Orissa are associated with worship of the "Hind Jaganath". Elms has travelled through the length and breadth of the Saoro country and has described the beliefs and practices of the Saoro at length. It is true that without understanding the religion of this tribe, one cannot understand any other aspects of their life. The Saoro believe in number of Gods and Goddesses which are invoked and propitiated so that they may grant prosperity and happiness to them. These Gods are worshipped in different ways at different times. Besides, the Saoro believe in ancestral spirits who are constantly watchful of the doings of the living generation. Any omission or negligence, breach of taboo and customary law on the part of the living generation is followed by disaster, death or trouble to the family and to the villagers. According to the Saoro, the diseases are caused due to the anger of the deities, ancestors and black-magic of the sorcerers. The religious functionaries of the village is known as Kuden who also work as arbitrator to the word of the Gods and convey the pleas and displeasures of the divines to village. The Saoro offer food, drink, meat and liquor to the Kuden at different occasions.



# Role of kinship in the Social life of Juangs of Keonjhar district, Orissa

Jagannath Dash

Juangs are mainly confined to the Keonjhar and Bhanakal districts of Orissa. Whereas in Bhanakal district the Juangs are found to be assimilated due to constant culture contact in the district of Keonjhar they are still found with their traditional culture. The Juangs of Keonjhar district therefore, attract a special attention for the more conventional studies on kinship in the field of socio-anthropology. The aspects of kinship which has been delineated in this paper is mostly collected in Ganapika and Janghira areas for the study of Juangs in the hills and plains areas respectively. The present paper is mainly based on the one-month field work which was conducted in the year 1975 for the partial fulfillment of the M. Sc degree in Anthropology.

The institution of kinship is based on the descent and marriage. By birth one primarily becomes a kin member of the family, as he acquires a fixed place among a primary kin. Thus the kin relation extends to the exogamous, primary degrees both in the paternal side as well as maternal side. In this way one belongs to all sorts of descent groups, like clan, lineage, local descent group etc. By descent he is attached to all his consanguineous or blood relatives and by marriage, he is equally related to all his affines. Within this kinship network he is tied to all his kin members by which his social life is regulated or promoted. Through the kinship tie he is related to his kinsmen surrounding him in the society. Juangs of Keonjhar are no exception to it. It is the kinship that plays a vital role in satisfying their basic needs. From the childhood days, up to the death, all members of the society maintain their social relationships in economic,

political, juridical and ritual fields as a corporate unit. Here in this context within the homogeneous society of Juangs, as it is already discussed, kinship as a mechanism for social regularity plays many a roles, in different fields of their social life, which are as follows:

## (a) Kinship as a Mechanism for Stable Economic Co-operation

Initially each Juang village consists of the members of one clan or Khil that forms a local descent group. Thus all the members of the village or local descent group function as a corporate unit for satisfying their basic economic needs. Each village is confined to its territorial land beyond which they never expect any land for cultivation. However, in the changing Juang villages, however, members of different Khils or clans are found. Still the other clan members perfectly maintain the norms and rules of the local descent group and function like a corporate unit, contradicting which, the membership is refused.

Mainly Juangs satisfy their major economic needs through shifting cultivation. They meet their sustenance, livelihood from it. Shifting cultivation in the hilly areas requires a collective or co-operative labour for clearing the bushes, grasses, burning of the trees, sowing of seeds, watching the crop and harvesting etc.

In this manner traditionally the local descent group was a corporate land-owning group and land was given to each member by the common decision. As per the ideal pattern for each and every member the whole descent group had to labour for clearing the jungle

and preparing the land for cultivation. Then all other activities like sowing of seeds, watching the crop, harvesting, etc. were to be performed by the concerned household members. But now in the plains areas, even after owning wet lands, they are still performing shifting cultivation as well as other agricultural works as a corporate unit as in the traditional order.

Now, after facing many changes in the socio-cultural aspects, Jungs try to keep their economic co-operation intact with the kinship. They are given wet-land by the Government, which has changed their traditional way of shifting cultivation to some extent. Unlike for the shifting cultivation, they require oxen, ploughing implements, better seeds, etc. for such wet-land cultivation works. Therefore, poor Jungs establish equal kinship with the members of the other caste or endogamous groups, in order to get help in agricultural works. So for all these informal requirements or relationships, a formal ritual kinship is vital according to their notion. Besides the field of ritual kinship, now-a-days becoming land owning members, Jungs also try to adopt polygyny to have more hands to work for greater production. However, with all these changes, shifting cultivation is given no less importance.

Establishment of ritual kinship is not the only source of getting help in agricultural work. One's own affines and consanguines are also given priority in such co-operation based activity. When one is in need, he may get help from his affines. His father-in-laws or wife's brothers may come forward to co-operate with him. Generally during harvesting time, all such co-operation occur. I have come across a number of such cases where affines, usually come to help their "Bandhu" or son-in-laws.

In shifting cultivation as well as other agricultural works, kinship does not differentiate the members according to their sex. All females are equally co-operative like males. When the males cut the trees or burn them, the females with sickles clean the grasses to prepare the field for cultivation. They also similarly take part in harvesting works. During the leisure time, females support their household economy or family economy by preparing string from out of date-palm leaves, and collecting forest products like gums, oil-seeds, oil-leaves and fire-wood, etc.

When the members of the local descent group face any disorder in the economic stability or they require to adopt something new into their traditional economic system, they solve or meet it by the common decision finalized through a conference, comprising the elders of the local descent group. The immigrants from other local descent groups, are given residence, and membership in their descent group by the common decision of the village in the presence of the village head or Ardhan. They are given ownership over a land for shifting cultivation from the village territory by the decision of all the members of the local descent group, and if they misuse it, they are deprived of the land in the similar process.

Jungs, by the kinship network are so co-operative for the fulfillment of economic needs that, they as a single endogamous unit observe certain rituals in this concern. They strictly observe Amba Nushkha, Dhans Nushkha rituals. After the harvest of the paddy is completed, nobody is allowed to take new rice before 'Nushkha' ceremony is over. They believe that if some one breaks this rule, then he will be eaten by the tiger. In case somebody breaks this rule, the village elder members decide it in the 'Majang' and he is punished to pay some rice as fine. Similarly cow greens and mangoes of the year are taken after a ceremony.

In other occasions like marriages when a poor one requires some economic assistance for the payment of bride price, or ceremonial feast, his kin members come forward (affines or consanguines) help him. The invited relatives as well as consanguines, coming to the marriage, bring with them rice, goat or hen as presentation in order to help him. Likewise in death or birth occasions the kin members also help the concerned person through rice or other types of commodities.

(b) Kinship ensures smooth observance of rituals and ceremonies for strengthening the interrelationship among the kin.

Many a rituals and ceremonies, Jungs follow in their life cycle. In the hilly non-irrigated areas, poor Jungs have to work hard in order to meet their basic needs, throughout the year. Amidst all these hardship and toil of the year, they enjoy their life in their own way to the fullest extent mainly through different rituals and ceremonies, are smoothly operated by the help of kin members. All these ceremonies

From the birth to death, it is found that a number of rituals such as, birth, death, marriage, Nushku, Ashvathi, Pusam Punal, Ganesha Punal etc. are observed colourfully with ecstasy.

**Birth**—Birth always brings a joyousness among the kin members. But at the same time it brings in pollution to the kin members of the minimal lineage group. The pollution is followed up to the seventh day of the birth. Mother's brother and father usually visit the new born-baby and in some way help the couple with rice etc. Similarly father's sister also comes. Till the completion of the seventh day the concerned members do not touch other members outside their minimal lineage and are forbidden to take fish or meat etc. On the seventh day 'Mamu' (Mog) comes and the members of the concerned minimal lineage replace their old earthen pots by new ones and become purified. It is called 'Uthari'. On the same day the fore-fathers are offered with 'Jari' or drinks. It is also offered to 'Dharm-Debits' and 'Baskumars'.

On the twenty first day the baby is given the name which is generally given by 'Mamu' (Mog) or father's sister. But now a days the wet nurses or Dharm etc. suggesting names for the babies.

**Death**—Like birth, death also causes a pollution among the members of the lineage group. The dead body of G. is taken to the burial ground by the help of the Baskhu or Kutumb members of the village. The maternal kins and so forth are also informed after the funeral pyre is over. However the kin members of one's own local descent group come forward first to help for the funeral ceremony. There are also some restrictions regarding the carrying of a corpse by the kin.

After 'Gaja' is burnt or buried, purificatory ceremony or 'Sudhi' ritual is done. There is no fixed day for the purificatory ceremony. Generally after the death, both the lateral kin and other relatives are informed and as soon as the kins come, the 'Sudhi' ritual is performed. Thus it takes place after two or three days or five days at maximum. Till the end of the Sudhi ceremony, the members of the 'Gaja' or corpse do not take non-vegetarian food or oil and usually sleep in the Majang. They do not touch other members. Purification is solely performed by the maternal uncle or 'Mamu'.

The kin members comprising the collateral and members of the minimal lineage group help the concerned persons of the dead person's family by bringing with them rice, goat, hen etc. After the purificatory ceremony is over the members of the minimal lineage wash their clothes, wash the Majang and home with cow-dung and replace the old earthen pots by new ones.

**Marriage**—Marriage is nothing but an institution that establishes a kinship relation between two groups of people, one as the bride-giving group and the other as the bride-receiving group. In this way it promotes the affinal kinship relation.

In the Juang marriage ceremony, it is the groom's party, who bears all the expenditures towards marriage for bride-price, ceremonial feast, etc. But bride's party is also concerned about such expenditures. All the bride's villages come with her to the groom's and enjoy the feast there. Therefore the burden of duty and expenditure is more for the groom's father. Generally they invite kinsmen who come to the groom's marriage and donate themselves amount of rice, goat or hen as presentations. Generally 'Mamu' brings more amount of gift. Besides all these the groom also gets help from his paternal kin within the lineage.

In the marriage ceremony the members of the local descent group such as Kangan and Bhandias help in changu beating and inspiring the ceremony. In the feast they equally help the groom's family to serve food items to the villages of the bride, and treat them well in order to keep up their village prestige.

On the first day after the marriage ceremony 'Nagam' helps to offer 'Jari' or drink to fore-fathers. Then from among the members of the local descent group, only Kutumb members perform the 'Kachala' ceremony according to their twenty divisions. Thus with the co-operation of all the kin members, the marriage ceremony is smoothly operated strengthening the inter-relationship among kins and different kin groups.

**Other Ceremonies**—Now coming to other rituals and ceremonies, Nushku (Grease, Paddy and Mango) is already described earlier. Pusam Punal is another ritual that is performed by common contribution. On that day each adult member of the local descent group contributes one pot of rice to 'Nagam', the ritual head of

The village. He, with mango leaves (Amarak) turmeric (Sesang) vermilion and raw rice (Aerunkup) worships the village deity. Then Nagame contribution of paddy is kept in the Majang and in the Akhaya Trihya' ritual it is distributed to all the villagers equisly and they sow them in their respective fields. The rest of the paddy is then divided into three shares. First share is given to the Kamenda (Nagam and Arhan) the second is given to the Sauntse (all the married persons) and the third is given to the Kangars and Balans (unmarried boys and girls). The paddy is invested for preparing cakes (Daisk). Lastly all the unions of the village greet the seniors by bowing down their heads before them and they say 't'uhai' in the same way 'Qamha' ritual is also performed by the co-operation of the village women. Ger + i dahan kha ha m + tpe d kins are not invited specially in these ceremonies.

### (c) Kinship as a device for Social Control

To meet the individus or group interests or goals, the society or culture always consists of more or less shared rules, norms for playing the game of ordered social life. By imposing rules, laws or forces as per the social norms, the social life of members of the society is promoted conformity to cultural codes, which in other way establish the social control.

The Society is nothing but an organized aggregation of individuals. The members of a society (homogeneous) are rather bound together by a normal force of kinship that unites them, dissolving their inequalities, disturbances and establishes a tranquility at large. Thus kinship functions as a device for social control.

In the homogeneous Juing society each and every member of the society is always conformed to the social or local norms. The moral force of kinship is always there to control their behaviours, ways of life in the violation or deviance of local norms. The general rules are implicit in their behaviour, deeply ingrained in their habits and unconscious mental processes.

Thus in the Juing society, there are different ways of maintaining the sexual joking, avoidance religious, economic behaviours, etc. and at the same time, there are leaders holding laws and powers to maintain the deviance or violation of such behaviours as per the cultural code.

Juings maintain incest taboo very strictly. They always try to maintain a moral or legal sexual life as per the sanction of the society.

Within their endogamy, clan is considered exclusively as exogenous. Deviation is rare and it is counteracted by their unconscious moral force. It sees their marriage rules as well as regulates the marital life. No Juang is allowed to marry within his own clan. It is considered as incestuous, because they treat their clan members as consanguines or blood-relatives as descendants of an unknown common ancestor. They call such members as 'Kutumba' and the affines as 'B'indhus.

Pre-marital relations among the young girls and boys of the same clan is similarly taken as incest. So as to prevent it the Kangars or unmarried boys after their initiation use to sleep in the 'Majang' or youth dormitory. They are no more allowed to sleep with the mother in the hut. Similarly Balans or unmarried girls sleep in a separate hut meant for them, guided by an old widow of the village. Brother-sister avoidance, and father-daughter avoidance are also culturally patterned in order to prevent the incest or 'begudang'. After the marriage until the construction of the neolocal home for the newly wedded couple the daughter-in-law sleeps with her mother-in-law in the hut for which the father-in-law and the married son have to sleep in the 'Majang'.

Both joking and avoidance rules in the field of kinship interaction provide ways of controlling, and relieving pressures at the stress points of a social system, hence are subtle but important forces of social control.

In the Juang society joking is most commonly confined to the members of one's own moiety, that is, among the paragon of alternate generations. It is also found with certain affines like siblings, etc. Usually members who take themselves as equals make jokings. In this way their interpersonal behaviours are regulated smoothly, as they take no offence to tease each other. The practice of cross-cousin marriage with the mother's brother's son or daughter parts as a sort of respectful behaviour with Mother. Avoidance is strictly observed between the members of the two moiety groups. Besides this brother-sister avoidance, father-daughter avoidance with wife's elder sister, avoidance with husband's elder brother, etc. also contribute to prevent incestuous activities. Familiarity with wife's younger sisters may give rise to sexual types of marriage and at the same time familiarity with husband's younger brother, may lead to the practice of junior levirate marriage. Thus within the 'wala

of kinship through a number of patterned behaviours and rules Juangs control their social life smoothly.

They sentence heavy punishments for incest. For simple legal sexual affairs the accused may be fined or compelled to marry the girl. But in incestuous activities, though the punishment differs from one local descent group to other, yet the accused is casted out of the society very often. Nobody likes to marry them. For breaking the rules of Nushka's co-society of mangoes and greens, they punish simply with some fines.

Like that of incest, killing a cow is also taken as a serious offence in the local descent group. At his kinmen mainly his consanguines in the lineage group isolate him, treat him like an untouchable and in no way he is helped by them. Through begging alms with a straw-rope around the neck he is punished to collect rice for the penance. In this way he is given twelve years of time for the penance violation of which comes to cut-caste him from the Juang society. During the period of penance the affines help him in some way or other by supplying food, etc. but they do not touch him. After the rice collection through begging is completed, he has to move around the fire seven times and to shave the hair cleanly. Then he himself cooks and serves to his kinmembers both affines and consanguines of the local descent group, after which he gets back his previous status in the LGG.

#### 4. Kinship as a Mechanism for Socialization

The individual's learning of the roles of his own society or culture is commonly known as socialization. It helps a human being to fit more adequately into his social environment. The specific spheres in the training of a child include instructions to learn good manners, habits and moralities of the society, as well as training in arts and crafts and important knowledge in traditions, code and rituals.

In the above perspective, it is the kinship as a mechanism, which socializes the children or youngsters of the society. A child is helpless at the time of birth. He is brought up through different stages of rearing, leaving, etc. by the help of his parents. First of all, he establishes his face-to-face relationship with his family members like father, mother, brother and sister etc. Thus from the early childhood, only his primary kin train him in different ways as per the social norms, behaviours, traditions, etc.

Within the sphere of face-to-face contact, father and mother are greatly responsible for developing the social or cultural concepts of a Juang child. A son is more akin to his father who treats him as a hard working and disciplined member of the local group as well as the society. Thus father trains him as to be a Juang in true sense. With father he joins in agricultural works, practically and theoretically he comes to know the economic resources, family management, etc. in his later life. In the same way, the son of medicine man, Raulu or traditional Sander gets training about the respective hereditary professions which enable him to succeed his father's position in the society. On the other hand, when a Juang girl grows up her mother trains her in different domestic responsibilities. She learns household or domestic works like cooking, bringing of drinking water from the stream, cleaning the house with cow-dung and serving of food, etc. from her mother. After attaining maturity the mother trains her about essential of the sex and future married life and teaches her the traditions, taboos, etc. during her menstruation period. The brothers and sisters during childhood share interact with each other like playmates. During this time they imitate different types of group activities. In later life elder brother is expected to control the younger brothers and sisters as the family head. Grown up or adult brothers usually work co-operatively in the field and forest by which the younger ones learn so many things from the elders. Similarly the younger sisters learn about the sex from the elderly married sisters or other females of the family.

Outside the family one directly mixes with his lineage members who are equal to him in age, generation and sex. Thus unmarried Juang boys or 'Kongari' form a group, perform chengu-dance and in some cases assist in ritual performances by the joining of the senior lineage members. By this a sense of co-operativeness is inculcated into their minds. In this way kin members in various ways socialize their younger generations in order to make them competent successors of the local descent group. In marriage and other rituals and ceremonies the Kzangas help the sisters by buying chengus and dancing. When they become efficient enough for working, they collectively go to the forest and collect firewood and other forest products. On the other hand Salans hold their unity in a similar manner and function as a supplementary group in

different recreational activities like dance, feast, etc. While in the group, they imitate each others' behaviour, mode of talking, dress pattern, easy process of performing various works, nursing younger babies, etc.

The joking members of the lineage get ample scope to meet each other in any occasion, which provides a lot for socialization. The grand parents, while joking with their grand children tell the mythical stories about their origin, heroic deeds by which, these legends, traditional stories pass from generation to generation and the younger generations, become conscious of their glorious past. Besides all these the lineage elders very often teach the youths about their mistakes and try to guide them in rituals, ceremonies like marriage, etc.

Thus it is seen that a Juang by the help of his surrounding kinsmen, gets training regarding his role to be played by him as a member of the Juang society in different spheres of activities like social, economic, political, religious, etc.

#### (e) Kinship as a device for settling inter-group conflicts

Conflict always occurs due to breaking of norms or rules that uphold the mores between two individuals or groups. Conflict occurs universally in every society. But it is always subdued by the kinship relation that binds the two involved groups together. Within one endogenous group Juangs always give priority to their kinship relation which balances their interests and dissolves conflict.

At the family level, conflict between husband and wife is a common happening in the Juang society. Generally it happens due to mis-understandings in common household affairs, which are afterwards, dissolved by the parents-in-law. Similarly brother-sister and parent-child conflicts are always subdued by the senior kinsmen in the lineage.

Coming to inter-group conflict, it is generally found that conflicts often happen in different ritual ceremonies in which obstruction of any sort of interest between two interacting groups causes conflict. Within the maximal lineage or local descent group, different lineages may arise some kind of conflict over some basic issues like landholding matters, economic and other socio-religious interests. In these cases the elders alongwith the village headman in the Majang decide and dissolve it by mutually establishing

their common interests. Similarly in rituals and ceremonies like Nuakhia, Pauss or Bamhe Punel, when one lineage violates the rule or norm of the local group, a conflict naturally arises. When one group follows these rituals and others don't join it or create any odd situation, then it hampers the common interest, but on the other side, the basic blood relationship behind them as the descendants of a common ancestor applies a moral force which solves the situation without much difficulty.

In marriage ceremony, conflicts may also arise due to any kind of misbehaviour by any affinal group to the other or inability to pay the bride-price in full. Often the conflict between husband and wife also involves the two concerned affinal kin groups in the conflict. Within one month stay in their locality, I have come across so many such conflicts. The elderly persons of both the Bendihi villages along with their headmen decide it in order to dissolve it which may fulfil the interest of both the affinal groups as well as of the husband and wife.

#### (f) Kinship as a political unit :

As a political unit, kinship has some significance too. Even after they are attached to the modern political units, they have still preserved their own form of political organisation within the boundary of the kinship organisation. Each Juang village, with its local descent group has a political head or 'Padhan', who is also considered as the head of the village as well as the clan group. The 'Padhan' is not a hereditary political head. There is a 'Sarder' for each 'Phiba' and the holds his supremacy over the 'Padhan's' under his 'Phiba'. 'Sarder' is a hereditary post. In this case, priority and preference is given to his clan or lineage as the dominant kin group. In Bendihi village Kanhu Juang is a traditional Sarder as well as the head of the local descent group. Selection of 'Padhan' are generally performed on the basis of age, experience, status and capacity. Decision of the familial disputes as well as other disputes, and some other social problems between the villages are solved by the Padhan of the local descent group. The aged and experienced members in the kin group take part in the traditional court. There are certain customary laws, conventions and punishments fixed for exogenous activities and breaking of exogenous or endogenous principles. But in most of the decisions, the elderly members of the lineage or clan punish the accused as per their common convention. Thus because of the kinship

organisation the members of the local descent group hold their political unit and regulate the social actions, behaviours as per the social norms and rules

Thus, in a simple or pre-industrial society like that of Jungs, kinship as a basic institution not only defines the structure of the society, but also serves as a mechanism for regulating the behaviour of the people in all respect in the local

descent group. It ensures, a stable economic-operation, smooth observance of rituals, a device for social control, an effective mechanism for social control, a device for settling inter-group conflicts and finally an able decision making body as a political unit of the society. Keeping in view all these essential functions of kinship in a homogeneous society, the role of kinship in the society can be depicted as central to all other interacting institutions.

# Traditional Political Organisation of the Sudha Saoras

Upali Aparamita

The Saoras are distributed in the Ganjam and Koraput districts of Orissa. They are divided into many sub-groups forming a continuum from the most isolated who still live largely by shifting cultivation on hill slopes, to those in the plains who are at various stages of assimilation with the surrounding non-tribal Oriya and Telugu populations.

The Sudha Saoras are one of them. The significance of this group is that they regard Lord Jagannath as their Primal deity. Lord Jagannath is known as Sudarshan. 'Sudra' meaning *Padma* (the Dardar) meaning 'Viewing'. Symbolically it means one who looks at the image of Lord Jagannath becomes *Padma* or *purn* and attains *moksha* or deliverance. The Sudha Saoras group thus seeks to establish their kinship with Sudarshan or Lord Jagannath.

The general insecurity of life and the weakness of the king favoured the development of the feudal system. The word 'feudal' comes from *feud* which originally meant a 'field' or land held on condition of service. In the feudal society, he was the ruler of power. The Sudha Saoras have developed a hereditary or graded organisation in which every person was allotted a position. The feudal structure was headed by the king.

In the earlier dispensation, the Saora area was divided into several administrative territories known as the 'Muthas'. Each mutha was composed of a number of villages. The mutha organisation denoted power and, under it, authority was distributed between the king and the Mutha heads. Thus vast areas could be efficiently administered by the establishment of

a hierarchical order. Each officer was given certain duties which he was to perform and in return was paid for his services.

Each of these muthas was placed under a mutha-head called by the name of 'Patra' who was appointed by the King\*. The headquarters of each Patra was situated in a strategic position in the mutha and served as a part of it. Besides the residential quarter, it was provided with a Court room where meetings were held and cases decided and a prison where offenders were kept.

During the British Raj, the system of muthas continued and the British authorities designated the Patra as the "Wardens of the Marches". The Patra, under the British regime was made responsible to the Tehsildar and paid a fixed amount usually Rs. 22 as *Pashmak* to him. This practice continued till the abolition of all the intermediary system including the mutha system in the year 1971.

Tradition had made the post of the Patra hereditary. A Patra could decide to designate his authority to his son when he became aged and was unable to carry out his functions effectively. In such a case, he had to write to the Tehsildar stating his desire to nominate his son as his successor. If he died before naming his successor, the gumasta or clerk of the Patra conveyed the news to the Tehsildar who chose the legitimate successor. If a Patra had no direct heir to succeed him, then his younger brother or any other capable person from his 'Vams' or family tree was chosen and adopted by the Patra.

The Patra, then, used to inform the Muddars and Patras through his orderly called the 'Khandu'

\*For instance, the Patra of Chendragiri mutha was appointed

by the King of Patana.



The Huddaders used to send their Patkas to convey the message to each village headman and estimate the date of the initiation ceremony. The Purohit fixed the date and the auspicious hour for the initiation ceremony. The village headman and the elders of the neighbouring villages included in the mutha went to attend the ceremony with gifts of vegetables and grains.

On the day of the initiation, the initiator was required to fast until the ceremony was over. In the presence of the Huddaders the initiate went to the Jagannath Temple at Chandragiri. The initiation was followed and a band performed in the temple before the assembled guests. A white silk sari was offered to Lord Jagannath and then tied as a turban on the head of the newly initiated Patra by the Bada Daisi. The new Patra then took a solemn oath to respect the sentiments of the general will by which he could become the Patra and begged for the co-operation of the officers and people in the discharge of his duties. After that, he visited the Manikewari Temple and the Nilakantheshwari Temple to seek their blessings. The end of the initiation ceremony is followed by a lavish feast arranged at the expense of the Patra in which all the assembled officials and villagers took part.

The main function of the Patra was to collect the *staka* or land revenue and house tax in cash from the people inhabiting the mutha. The village headman deposited the amount annually with the Patra and took a written receipt. Some of this amount was earmarked for the temples of Jagannath, Manikewari and Nilakantheshwari.

Besides the land revenue and the house tax, the Saora villages also provided goats, honey, pulses and vegetables to the Patra and his staff on festive occasions. They also supplied straw to the Patra for thatching purposes. The Patra and his staff also employed the Saoras as labourers in various agricultural operations, domestic work such as thatching houses, and developmental works without any payment of wages. However, some food was provided to the Saora labourers.

The Patra was responsible for settling inter-village and intra-village disputes. If any conflict remained unresolved at the village level, then the village headmen brought it to the notice of the Patra through the concerned Patka. The Patka, the accused and the aggrieved parties and the village headman were to be present during the

settling of the case by the Patra. The Huddaders may be called if the Patra wished them to be present.

The Patra would first ask the headman to relate the main issues of the specific case. Then he would allow both the parties to give their account and also take the opinion of the Patka and other Huddaders. Finally, he would give a decision or verdict. If the accused did not obey the verdict of the Patra, then he was imprisoned and later handed over to the police. If the culprit accepted his crime, then only a monetary fine was imposed on him and the money collected was diverted to the village fund. The culprit had also to pay some amount of money to the Patra corresponding to the Court fees. Disputes concerning two villages within a mutha were also decided by the Patra.

Sometimes the Patra went to the concerned village to decide the case. In such a situation food and lodging was provided for him and other mutha officials accompanying him by the villagers under the initiative of the headmen. All matters excepting the *Kasula* or hereditary cases, could be referred to the Patra.

The Patra was also incharge of all the developmental works in his mutha. He executed the orders of the Tehasildar for the construction of roads, thatching of thatched and bungalows and digging of tanks and irrigation canals.

The Patra took the responsibility of all matters concerning the temples. During Rath Yatra, he performed the *Chharganwari* or *ghum* sweeping of floor for Lord Jagannath. Without the Patra's signature in the sale deeds no land transaction in the mutha was regarded as valid. The Patra received some *inam* land, i.e., rent-free land from the King and enjoyed many other privileges.

Each Patra maintained a number of Huddaders who represented the rank and file of the feudal order. The Huddaders were graded into fifteen hierarchical units as below:-

- (1) Bahara or Bada Daisi
- (2) Gajendra
- (3) Dandawana
- (4) Padhari
- (5) Bada Kahara
- (6) Jagatwigh
- (7) Ghadai
- (8) Dalpai
- (9) Bada Nayak

- (10) Kotha Dolei
- (11) Sana Dandessana
- (12) Sana Padhari
- (13) Sana Bado Kehars
- (14) Rout
- (15) Majhi

In the Chandregiri mutha, all the fifteen posts of the Huddadars were hereditary. Each Huddadar had four inam Palikas under him and was given a few villages of a mutha to administer, collect revenue and to maintain peace and order.

The work of the Huddadars was to supervise the work of his Palikas and to carry out the orders of the Patra. It was also his responsibility to look to the comforts of high ranking persons and their entourage during their tour in his area and to arrange supplies required for their camps and ponies to carry their luggage from place to place. He supervised their timely collection of *satu* (land revenue and house tax in cash) and *tanning* (land tax in kind) from the cultivators. Later *tanning* was abolished by a Revenue Settlement and the amount of land revenue was fixed on village basis.

The post of the Bahara Dolei was most important among the Huddadars. He had the closest relationship with the Patra among the Huddadars and brought all matters of importance to the notice of the Patra. During the temporary absence of the Patra, the Bahara Dolei sent an application to the Tahasildar and got a sanction to officiate against the post of Patra.

In lieu of the services rendered by the Huddadars, each was given some amount of inam land by the Patra. These inam lands were tax-free and could not be mortgaged or sold out to others. They also enjoyed a share from the *Peasni* collected by the Palikas from the ryots as well as the *satu*.

To assist the Huddadars in their work the Patra also appointed a number of Palikas or *Peasnis* who formed the mitras of the feudal order. In the Chandregiri mutha, there were sixty Palikas. Thus each Huddadar had four Palikas under him to help in the collection of *satu* and administration in the allotted villages.

Whenever any village failed to pay the *satu* and *tanning* in time the Palikas visited the concerned village and served the notice issued by the Patra on the defaulters. They also arranged for the quick collection of the dues from the

village. Usually payment of these dues was made by the village headman in December-January. The Palikas also served as messengers. The Patra communicated with the Tahasildar, Huddadars or any village headman only through the Palikas. The presence of the Palika also required during the settlement of a judicial case.

For the services rendered to the Patra and the Huddadars, the Palikas were paid in kind at the rate of ten mases of grain annually per household from the villages which were allotted to them. Later on they were paid in cash out of the *satu* collected. The Palikas also collected *Peasni* from the ryots. They were also given inam lands by the Patra.

All the post-holders, that is, the fifteen Huddadars and the sixty Palikas were responsible to the Patra. In case any one of them became an oppressor, it was the responsibility of the Patra to remedy the situation and restrain him. If he did not succeed, he wrote to the Tahasildar to oust the culprit and recommended another name. Until the recommended person was recognised by the Tahasildar, he was not allowed to occupy the inam land of the ousted person.

The lowest position in the echelon of the feudal order was that of the Nayaka (Nalka) who served as the headman of the village. He was selected by the King in consultation with the Patra. Gradually the post became a hereditary one, the son succeeding his father. In the day-to-day life in the village, the Nalka had an important role to play. The villagers normally looked to him for guidance. The Nalka had a deputy known as Dolei, who assisted him in the discharge of his duties. Each village also had a watcher called *Gakus* who worked as an orderly or *Peon* of the Nalka. He was usually a *Pano* and was paid a cash salary.

The duty of the Nalka was to collect the *satu* and *tanning* from the cultivators of his village. The amount of land revenue was fixed on village basis and it was the responsibility of the Nalka to collect the same from each household and pay the *satu* on time. In return he was given a receipt in which the amount of money submitted and the date were mentioned. He took care of the officers during their visit providing for their transport and food.

The Naika was also responsible for maintaining law and order and adjudicating intra-village disputes. If the dispute was of a complicated nature and beyond his control, he referred it to the Patra who settled it with the help of the courtiers at the headquarters of the raths. The Naika's duty in this respect was to escort the aggrieved and the accused parties to the court of the Patra and explain in detail the case during arbitration. If it was an inter-village dispute, the Naikas of the disputed villages convened a common meeting and settled the matter in the presence of the village-elders. Failing to adjudicate the case, the Naikas referred the matter to the Patra whose decision was regarded as final.

The Naika also collected money from the villagers for festivals and other festivals as also to fulfill other needs of the village. In case of natural calamities or the wrath of supernatural Beings, the Naika asked the Jani to invoke and propitiate the supernatural powers and the Sejus to find out remedies for overcoming the calamity.

Such village also had a traditional council of elders who formed the Pancha Committee. It was comprised of members who were experienced and wise. As the word Pancha suggests, there were five members in the village committee. The council of elders helped the Naika and Dalesi in adjudicating intra-village disputes.

Parallel to the Political-administrative set-up, the feudal order had a separate organisation in the shape of the traditional tribal council. This council controlled the norms and ethos of the respective tribes and thus accounted for the smooth and orderly functioning of the social order.

The traditional tribal council of the Sudha Sora was known as the 'Kula Sabha'. Though the feudal Political-administrative set-up has become defunct with the introduction of the Panchayat Raj after the country's independence, the Kula Sabha still continues to function and control the patterns of social behaviour. Previously, the Kula's control extended over six Nayaks. But at present, twelve regions of the Ganjam district where the Sudha Soras are inhabiting have come under the purview of the Kula Sabha. The Kula Sabha has been categorised under two heads—the Centre and the regional level. At the Centre, the traditional

Kula officials in order of hierarchy are the following:

1. Kusapelli Badapradhan
2. Rajpur Pradhan
3. Talanga Patra Pradhan
4. Pandiba Sana Pradhan
5. Chhelligada Mahanayak
6. Pandiba Mahanayak

At the apex of the Kula is the Kusapelli Badapradhan who is the head of the Sudha Sora Sabha. All the above posts are hereditary. In addition to the traditional Kula officials, a working Committee has been formed from the year 1988. The Committee is headed by the Sabhapati who conducts the various meetings held every year to solve the disputes and to frame new rules and regulations. The Chhelligada Mahanayak has been elected as the permanent Sabhapati. The other Members include the Deputy Sabhapati, a Secretary, three Assistant Secretaries, a Cashier and an Assistant Cashier. All of them are elected for a period of five years.

Similarly at the regional level, there are a set of traditional Kula officials whose posts are hereditary. In order of hierarchy, they include the following:—

- (1) Sana Pradhan
- (2) Mutha Nayak
- (3) Dandis
- (4) Shalishhal

The Regional Committee consists of the Sabhapati, the directing-member and the cashier who hold their posts for a period of five years. Each region also has a Gheta Patra who informs the different Kula Members of the villages about the venue and date of the Sabha meetings.

The lowest position in the hierarchical organisation of the Kula is held by the Member who is chosen by consensus from among the villagers to represent the village in the Kula Sabha. The Member collects an annual fee of Rs. 2500 from his villagers and deposits it with the cashier of the region in which his village is a part through the directing-member. The member also solves minor Kauria offences. Cases of complex nature are referred to the Regional Kula Sabha through the directing-member of the particular region. The directing

member is also empowered to dismiss a Kula Member in consultation with the Sabhapati in case he fails to perform his duties properly.

The Regional Kula Sabha keeps half the amount collected and gives the other half to the centre. In addition to the annual meeting of the Central Kula Sabha and the half-yearly meetings of the different Regional Kula Sabhas, the Sudha Sapti Samaj also conducts a Mahasabha, once in every five years. For the Mahasabha, every household contributes 4 Kgs. of rice and dal and a sum of Rs. 2-00. Cases of utmost importance are decided and new rules

and regulations are framed in the Mahasabha which continues for three days.

The traditional Political Organisation of the Sudha Saptis was thus an elaborate and well-designed system and performed administrative, social and ritual functions. Its importance and value have been reduced after the coming in of the Panchayati Raj system and the new systems of land tenure and land revenue collections. With the abolition of Muthas and establishment of direct link between the State and the tenant its role in that area was fully extinguished. Now it survives with some residual socio-cultural functions, a remnant of an important tribal organisational pattern.

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